

CHAPTER IX

TOUR IN THE EAST 1830-1831

The journey on which Disraeli now embarked with his friend Meredith proved a capital event in his life and had marked effects on his whole subsequent career, both literary and political. It not only enlarged his experience beyond that of most young Englishmen of his day, but, what was even more important to one of his peculiar temperament, it helped to give definite purpose and significance to that Oriental tendency in his nature which, vaguely present before, was henceforth to dominate his imagination and show itself in nearly all his achievements. We can see the influence of the Eastern journey in *Contarini Fleming*, in *Alroy*, in *Tancred*, and in *Lothair*; but we can see it not less clearly in the bold stroke of policy which laid the foundations of English ascendancy in Egypt, in the Act which gave explicit form to the conception of an Indian Empire with the Sovereign of Great Britain at its head, and in the settlement imposed on Europe at the Berlin Congress. The letters * written to his family during the journey have been published since his death; and after the lapse of eighty years they retain their freshness and interest in a way that is rare with such compositions. Keen observation, a graphic

¹ The references here -will "be to the 1887 edition of *Lord Beaconsfield's Letters*, in which the *Some Letters* and *Lord Beaconsfield's Correspondence with his Sister* are combined in one volume.